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# OSWALD;

## A Tale of the Early Church.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FOUNDING OF LATIN  
CHRISTIANITY IN OUR ISLAND BY

S. AUGUSTINE, A.D. 596.

BY THE

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“ He who scann’d Sodom for His righteous men  
Still spares thee for thy ten ;  
But should vain tongues the Bride of Heaven defy  
He will not pass thee by,  
For as earth’s kings welcome their spotless guest,  
So gives He them by turns to suffer, or be blest.”

DR. NEWMAN. “ England.”

*Verses on Various Occasions.*







## P R E F A C E.

---

THE object of this little tale is to introduce young readers to some of the earliest events connected with the rise of Christianity in our island, to explain in a popular way some of the Church's ancient customs, and to show that the revival of rites, ceremonial, and Church order which we of this generation are witnessing, is after all only a restoration, and a restoration not of elaborate mediæval uses, but of primitive simplicity. As far as possible, I have adhered to historical accuracy, and where I have deviated from it, it is rather by way of introducing characters and scenes, than by suppressing facts. I have found it impossible to maintain the strict chronology of the time, as we gather it from the best authors, but I have made it my endeavour to play out the various events of my story, in about the time I believe them really to have taken. The embassy sent by Augustine to Rome was des-

patched, according to Holinshed's Chronicles, chapter xix., from England, but for the convenience of my narrative, I have ventured to assume that it was sent *on* by Augustine from Arles, after he had received the pall at the hands of the metropolitan there.

With reference to the manners, customs, and dress of our ancestors in the sixth century, I have done my best to describe them accurately, but if I have been guilty of any grave error, I must ask for indulgence on the ground of the obscurity in which this early age is wrapt, and on the plea that many of the sources of information which do exist, have not been within my reach. I would fain express a hope, that if this little work be read at all, it will be read not entirely without profit, and if it should be instrumental in promoting amongst the young the growth of one principle of primitive and Catholic truth, it will more than have answered the most sanguine expectations of its author.



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# OSWALD;

A Tale of the Early Church.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ARRIVAL.

**I**T was towards the end of the month of April in the year 596, on a day, whose sunny glow seemed to give a foretaste of summer, that a party of four persons was seated on the shingly beach of the coast of the Isle of Thanet. Dreamily each member of the party gazed over Pegwell Bay out into the far distance of the blue sea: their eyes rested on what is now the highway from our own great city to many a far distant port, a highway traversed by merchant vessels which serve to unite more closely the mother country to her colonies, but at this early period this highway was hardly at all used. Few were then the vessels which

ploughed the deep seas, and where now we might see in the Downs a forest of masts, at the time of which I am writing only here and there a chance fishing vessel with its square sails and upturned prow served to break the monotony of the sky-line.

The group consisted of two men and two women. The two former, just verging on manhood, were tall, and well-shaped, and had the blue eyes and fair hair of true Saxons. Of the women, one was a matron of some forty years, handsome in feature and dignified in bearing. Her name was Bertha, and she was the wife of Ethelbert, King of Kent, who possessed suzerainty over all the tribes of East Anglia. By her side reclined her daughter, Edburge,<sup>1</sup> who without possessing beauty, according to the strict laws by which beauty is defined, was yet characterised by that nameless charm which is the inseparable companion of a kindly heart, and a gentle manner. Her sunny smile had chased many a care from troubled breasts, and had made her universally beloved by all her father's people. Edbald, her brother, and Se-red, her cousin, complete the group to which I have somewhat abruptly introduced my reader.

<sup>1</sup> There was another daughter, Ethelburge, who was desirous of embracing monastic life. She eventually however married Edwin, King of Northumberland, whose conversion she effected.—See Speed's *Britannia*.

For some time no one had spoken. The regular dash of the wavelets on the shingle, and the sigh which they heaved as they were borne backward from the shore had lulled the party into dreamy silence. None seemed willing to break the spell which was upon them till Edbald raising himself from his recumbent posture at length said,

"Mother, seest thou yon vessel which seems trying to catch the shifting breeze? Methinks she is making for the land, and her build is not that of our Kentish coasters. I judge her rather to be from the shores of France."

"He must be a bold captain," replied she, "who would face our treacherous channel in so frail a bark. The weather which looks so fair at mid-day may be foul enough ere sundown."

"Ay, and our treacherous countrymen too," added Sered quickly, "for it is not every islander who will give strangers welcome to hearth and board."

"Hush," said Edbald. "An this be so let it not be spoken of amongst us. For to *us* at least every stranger is a friend until he hath proved himself a foe, and Barbarian though the proud Romans were wont to call us, yet we are not insensible to the laws of hospitality."

"Rightly spoken," said Queen Bertha, look-

ing fondly at her son. "Follow in thy father's<sup>1</sup> steps; be like him the friend of the friendless, and the protector of the oppressed, and then shalt thou never lack a Friend to protect thee. To every stranger we owe a place by our fireside, and a seat at our board, and then if he repay kindness by treachery our honesty will be more than a match for his guile."

Meanwhile the small vessel which had given rise to the foregoing conversation was fast nearing the shore. The breeze which had been fitful since noon had now entirely dropped, and the sailors plying their oars with vigour soon brought their craft within a stone's-throw of the land. The tide was out, and the water for some little distance shallow, and accordingly some dozen sailors leapt out, and by dint of hauling and pushing soon ran her up on the beach out of reach of the waves.<sup>2</sup>

The loungers upon the shore did not attempt to restrain their curiosity, but approached the place of disembarkation. It must be remembered that such an arrival, though an everyday occurrence in the nineteenth century,

<sup>1</sup> From the frank manner in which Ethelbert embraced Christianity, and from his permitting his queen to continue the free practice of her religion prior to his conversion, it is evident that his character was a generous and just one.

<sup>2</sup> A common scene in any Kentish fishing-village.



was quite an event in the sixth, for though fishing vessels and boats plied, even at this early period, a tolerably brisk trade, yet vessels from foreign lands came only at long intervals to the island inhabited by the rough and rude "barbarian."

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## CHAPTER II.

### RECOGNITION.

THE first of the voyagers to set foot on England's shore was one who was destined to exercise a powerful influence over her future history. The name of Augustine is still, and must ever be, dear to all her children, for it is to him that they owe the rekindling of Religion's flame in their land, a flame which ever since has burnt bright and clear. Nor is it too much to say that to him also is due much of our boasted culture and civilization, for if, as is generally admitted, Christianity is essential to the maturing of these, may not he who sows the seeds of Christian truth in a land be regarded as in great measure the source of all its future prosperity? Saint, Augustine was, if ever there was one, and, though that title has suffered serious loss at the hands of

those who have permitted its too promiscuous distribution, its character is redeemed by the many great names to which it still clings. The sanctity of Augustine can be measured less by his teaching than his life. Of a tall and stately presence was this great *Reviver*<sup>1</sup> of Christianity in our island, reverend in demeanour, and in the full vigour of manhood. His forehead was broad, betokening intellect; his mouth, firmly set; and his nose, slightly aquiline, as was natural in one of Roman descent. He was clad in a long black garment, confined round the waist by a cord. He had sandals on his feet, and his whole dress was such as became holy men of the time, sombre in colour, and simple in fashion, and distinguished from that of laymen rather by these negative qualities, than by any positive difference of shape and material.

Attended by about forty comrades Augustine landed in England after a journey through the territories of France, so beset with hardships and dangers, that at one period the great missionary enterprise had well-nigh failed. Happily however the hindrances which the Evil One had

<sup>1</sup> For Christianity was first preached at a far earlier period in England than that of S. Augustine, according to tradition by S. Joseph of Arimathea; but at the time of S. Augustine's landing the truth was well nigh extinct except perhaps in Wales.

thrown in its way were thwarted by a Higher Power, and now as Augustine steps upon shore he is at once in the midst of an influential party of those very islanders to whom he has been sent. Queen Bertha, so soon as she came within speaking distance, was proceeding to interrogate him, whom she rightly conjectured to be the leader of the band, but ere she could do so a youth stepped forward, and speaking in the tongue of the country, forestalled her intention.

“Madam,” said he, “thou art not unknown to me as the queen of the great Ethelbert, whom may Heaven preserve; I would bespeak thy protection in behalf of these strangers. See, our numbers are small, and we are unarmed. In truth I who address thee am one of thy own countrymen, nay, rather, let me say one of thy loyal subjects,” (at these words he made a low reverence.) “This holy man, for so must I call him, is a stranger to our land, ignorant of our customs and of our language; I am but his mouth-piece, interpreting his feelings when I say that his mission to our shores is one of peace and goodwill towards us.”

The speaker, who in addition to a good address, had a frank and open manner to recommend him, here paused, and Queen Bertha at once made answer.

"Doubtless thy words are true. Falsehood would ill accompany such a face and manner, and indeed I discern by thy blue eyes and flaxen hair that thou art of no southern lineage. To thee and thy companions will I willingly extend my protection till such time as ye can hold interview with my Lord the King. But surely I recognise in the dress and reverend demeanour of thy chief one who is a soldier of the true CHRIST. Many such have I beheld at the court of my father<sup>1</sup> in Paris, and can it be that my prayers to the true God have at length been answered, and that a teacher has been indeed sent to dispel the shades of ignorance and unbelief which still overshadow my land?"

"'Tis so, in truth, most noble lady. Those prayers have not been in vain. See, I present unto thee Augustine, a reverend Father from the monastery of the Blessed Gregory at Rome, whom he hath sent to make more widely known those truths with which thou thyself hast been familiar from thy childhood."

"The great God be praised," piously rejoined the queen. "'Twill rejoice the heart of the holy Luidhard<sup>2</sup> to meet one who cometh

<sup>1</sup> Bertha was the daughter of Charibert, king of Paris, and a Christian princess. She *may* have petitioned Gregory to send over missionaries. See Robertson's "Church History," vol. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop of Senlis and Confessor to the queen.

from the See of the great Apostle himself."

Augustine here stepped forward and addressed a few words in the Latin tongue to the youth whose name was Oswald, and whom I may as well introduce at once as the hero of my tale.

"The most reverend father," said Oswald, "bids me thank thee for thy cordial welcome, and it rejoices him much that he hath so early lighted upon one who is no stranger to Gospel truth. He would have me say that in return for thy proffered hospitality he will offer to thy Royal husband the only gift he hath to give, the gift of eternal life."

During this conversation the remainder of the party had been silent observers of the scene that passed, but now Edbald who had been narrowly scanning the countenance of Oswald, broke out into a sudden exclamation.

"Surely," said he, "I behold my ancient playfellow, and the companion of my boyish rambles. My eyes do much deceive me if they are not even now resting upon Oswald son of Cynewulph, the citizen of Canterbury. Thou art he who wast missing so long that even thy parents gave thee up for dead."

"I am indeed he," replied Oswald; "taken by fraud, I was placed on board ship and sold as a captive to traders from foreign lands; and

thou, most noble youth, art the son of our gracious king. The hand of time hath passed lightly on thy brow: it hath wrought none other change than to merge a noble boyhood into the nobler estate of man. But to me it has brought far greater changes. From freedom I passed into harsh servitude, and from the condition of a slave I was brought by a kind Providence to a far more glorious liberty than that I left behind—a 'liberty wherewith CHRIST hath made me free,'—but I dare no longer address thee as my former playfellow."

"Oswald," interrupted Edbald, "Believe me, how great soever be the changes time can work, it is powerless to sever true friendship. The lapse of years makes but our meeting the more welcome to me, and recollection which spans the long interval, is alike sweet and bitter, sweet in that it recalls joys so real, bitter in that it reminds me that these joys can return no more. In thy face I perceive that thy former self remains unaltered, guileless and frank as ever."

If any reader feels surprised at noble sentiments such as these springing up in the heart of one who had been bred a heathen at a heathen Court, let me remind him that there was the powerful though scarcely-felt influence of a mother acting on the heart of Edbald, which had given him much of the spirit, though not

the name, of a Christian man. Queen Bertha herself possessed a natural nobility of soul, which had been purified and chastened by the teaching of Christianity, and her consort, though still clinging to the traditions of his fathers, had added to them<sup>1</sup> high morality and strict justice, showing, as in the case of the Emperor Aurelius<sup>2</sup> and the statesman Seneca, that it is possible for men while still in the ignorance of heathendom to attain to a high degree of excellency of life. Bright then were the influences under which Edbald was brought up, and bright the promise of his youth, a promise which alas! was never destined to be fulfilled.<sup>3</sup>

Queen Bertha was much pleased to see in this recognition by her son of the friend of his early days a steadfastness of affection which bore testimony to a high and generous disposition, and herself addressing Oswald with great cordiality, she bade him invite Augustine and his train to accompany her to the seaside abode, at which she was temporarily residing.

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, cap. xix., tells us that Ethelbert, besides being very expert in war, also permitted his queen freely to exercise her religion—a proof of his liberality of mind.

<sup>2</sup> See "Seekers after God,"—Sunday Library.

<sup>3</sup> For on the death of his father Edbald relapsed into paganism.

## CHAPTER III.

## WELCOME.

**T**HIS early period of English history was marked by a spirit of hospitality to which our countrymen have ever laid claim, and which was still further developed in the Middle Ages. It was most conspicuous perhaps at a time when Feudalism drew more closely together the Master and dependant, and when the distinction between class and class was marked by more even gradations. But even the Saxons were not far behind their descendants in hospitality, and provided that their visitors were recognised as friends, they were ever accorded by them a ready welcome to their halls.

The dwelling of the Anglo-Saxon was by no means so devoid of comfort as some may be tempted to suppose. The buildings were of wood, for it was long ere masonry came to be employed in the erection of dwelling-houses, or even churches, for though many of the latter are now clearly ascertained to belong to the Anglo-Saxon period, yet none probably can be traced so far back<sup>1</sup> as the first rise of Christianity in our island. To these wooden houses however, belonged a certain air of strength and solidity, resulting from the frequent use of

<sup>1</sup> Rickman's Gothic Architecture, p. 55, and ff.



beams of considerable size, as well as from the smallness of the apertures which served for doors and windows. In the dwelling which I am describing considerable neatness was observable in the fitting of the beams and joists; the roof was finished off by a kind of roughly-hewn wooden cornice. In the interior, as well as in the exterior, there were indications that the dwelling was inhabited by persons of some distinction. The long table which stood in the central hall (this was lighted from the roof) was supported by tressels quaintly and ingeniously carved, reminding us somewhat of those grotesque corbels which support the roofs of some of our oldest<sup>1</sup> Norman churches. The walls had a wainscoting of polished oak, and the floor also was constructed of oak boards well strewn with rushes of the most scrupulous cleanness. Such was the seaside abode of the king to which Augustine, and his party, who deferentially followed him, now drew near.

On their closer approach, an ecclesiastic, for such his dress betokened him, came forth to greet them. This was Luidhard, the confessor of the queen, and formerly Bishop at the Court of Charibert, king of Paris.

"My brother," said Augustine, addressing him in the Latin tongue, "for such I perceive by thy dress that thou art, I feel sure that

<sup>1</sup> Notably Iffley, near Oxford, and Barfrestone, in Kent.

I shall not come to thee as an unwelcome guest, bringing as I do good tidings from many Churches of CHRIST. It rejoiceth me much to make known to thee that the word of truth still continues to thrive at Aix, at Arles, and at Autun, through all which cities have I passed on my journey hitherward. It only grieves me to think that I can give no tidings of thy own city, through which the cruelty of Fredegonde permitted me not to pass.”<sup>1</sup>

“God be praised for thy mission,” said Luidhard.

“And may He extend His favour towards it,” piously added Augustine. “It would seem,” he continued, “as if Heaven would direct my first efforts to the noble family which I have thus opportunely met.”

“Coming as thou dost from Rome,” said Luidhard, “thy teaching will be the more readily received, for the fame of the Holy See is not unknown even here. The king, my master, is now at the royal city of Canterbury, and thither the queen would fain repair to-

<sup>1</sup> “On the death of Charibert, in 561, his kingdom was seized by Chilperic, and this, with Soissons, which Chilperic held before, formed the new kingdom of Neustria. On the death of Chilperic, Fredegonde, his widow, held the government, and owing to her savage cruelty (she had murdered her husband), Augustine and his followers were compelled to avoid the city of Paris.”—See P. 100, note 5. Moberly’s Edit.

morrow. If my royal mistress would despatch a messenger to him this night asking him to grant thee audience, I doubt not that he would readily receive one who comes as a 'bode'<sup>1</sup> from the great city of Rome. The king is in no way hostile to the truth, nay, I believe that were it not for considerations of the State, he would, ere now, have thrown off his heathen superstitions. In the mean while thou wilt tarry with us at least till to-morrow's light, that so thou mayest be able to confirm the queen in the faith wherein she is already grounded."

"Thou hast said, my brother," replied Augustine, "and so let it be; I have no fear, but that under God's providence I shall be enabled to win over to the truth the heart of thy Master. We will talk more of this anon, but let us now not seem to neglect the good cheer which the queen has offered us."

So saying, they entered the hall, at the upper end of which was set a small table on an elevated dais. At right angles to this and down the entire length of the hall was ranged the long table, described above as supported on carved tressels, and which was now duly prepared for the evening meal. The whole arrangement differed but little from that adopted at the Universities, where the higher members of the college seat themselves at the so-called

<sup>1</sup> A bearer of tidings.

“high” table, while the juniors take their places at tables below.

In the centre of this high table Queen Bertha took her seat, having on her right hand Augustine, and on her left, Luidhard. At the same table sat also Edbald, Sered, and Oswald; and next to the latter, Edburge. The remainder of Augustine’s followers, together with the retainers of royalty took up their places at the long table.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### FIRST LESSONS.

**B**EFORE the repast was served Augustine and his companions, together with the queen and the Bishop, made the sign of the Cross, a custom which it is well to remember was common among the ancients at the beginning of any ordinary action of daily life.<sup>1</sup> Then were borne in large wooden platters and trenchers, having on them portions of beef and pork, capons, and rough-made pasties. Such was the thoroughly English fare: for though we read that at a later period “musical-headed French cooks”<sup>2</sup> were in vogue, these innova-

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian de Coronâ, cap. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Holinshed’s Chronicles.

tions on old customs had not as yet been introduced. Each guest had set before him a wooden spoon and fork, for neither silver nor pewter were as yet employed even by those of the highest ranks. The drinking goblets were of horn; and together with the viands, tankards of ale and cider were arranged at intervals down the length of the table.

During the meal the queen plied Augustine with questions relating to his travels, to the affairs of the Church at Rome, and more particularly to the state of that part of France through which he had passed. In the course of their conversation Luidhard acted as interpreter, and with his assistance Augustine gave the queen as full an account as possible of all that had befallen him since he quitted the great city of Rome. He spoke of the zeal of Pope Gregory for the conversion of England—told how his attention was first directed to our shores by seeing a number of fair-haired youths displayed for sale in the market place, and to his inquiry as to who these might be, received for his answer that they were Angles. “‘Angles?’” said he, as he regarded their frank open countenances and golden hair, ‘are they not rather fitted to be *Angels*?’<sup>1</sup> and,” continued Augus-

<sup>1</sup> This story illustrates Gregory's punning disposition, and is told by all the historians.—See Bede's Ecc. Hist. ii. 1. He continued further to play on the words

tine, "Oswald, my companion from Rome, will tell you of this better than I can, for he was one of those to whom the Holy Gregory's words were addressed."

Oswald, to whom allusion was thus made, had been engaged in earnest conversation with Edburge. He too had been narrating in his mother tongue, which he had not forgotten during his exile abroad, the various adventures which the missionary band had met with by the way, and he was now painting in glowing colours the glories of the Roman Church, the exactness and beauty of her ritual, the sanctity of her Bishop, and the devotion of her clergy. Thus he was kindling in the breast of his hearer a spark which was soon to break forth into the flame of belief.

"Yes," exclaimed Oswald, warming with his theme; "thou hast but to see Rome to believe. Can any one call that religion false which has endured the brunt of time, the shock of so many persecutions? And why has it been able to bear them? Because it is founded on a rock, against which the waves of violence expend themselves in vain. That rock is the blessed Peter himself, and though he has passed away to his rest he still lives in his successor, the blessed Gregory, whose sanctity and wisdom "Aella" and "Deirâ," but in these last the force is much weakened by the translation.

make him worthy to sit in the Apostle's chair. Then there is the Coliseum, where martyrs shed their life's blood—blood which has been called the seed<sup>1</sup> of the Church: would those martyrs, think you, have poured forth that life's blood for a lie, or is it to be supposed that so many a wise man could have been the victim of delusion when he willingly and thinkingly surrendered up the dearest of earth's possessions? Oh, no! That for which they died could be no mere phantasy. No vain superstition could have given them support in prison, and have made them rejoice even in the hour of their extremest agony. Contrast all this with your own religion, your magical rites, your worship of her whom you admit to be a goddess presiding over sensual pleasure. Doth not thy heart condemn thee when thou preferrest the worship of such a deity to that of a Merciful SAVIOUR? And then which of your priests would give up his life for his faith? Not one of them, I trow; and as for your vaunted signs and wonders—do not the miracles of our CHRIST and His servants far more than match these? Those works of His had indeed for their first object to show forth the glory of God, but they were directed also to heal the sick, to relieve the sufferer, and strengthen the infirm."

<sup>1</sup> Sanguis martyrum semen est ecclesiæ.—*Tertullian*.

He paused, and Edburge replied,  
"Something of all this I know ; my good mother has often talked to me of the sufferings which holy men of thy Church have undergone. She heard much about them at the home of my grandsire. I confess to thee that I am struck by much of what thou sayest. I feel that I *may* be led to embrace this faith, but not yet, not yet. Let me pause and reflect ere I throw aside and for ever all the teaching of my childhood. And my dear mother, too, would have me become a Christian, yet will she not urge me against my inclination."

"Fair mistress," interposed Oswald with great earnestness, "only reflect on what I have told thee. Decide, as thou sayest, only after reflection. I know full well whither that will lead thee—reflection can have but one result."

She assented, but seemed disinclined further to pursue the conversation, and at this moment Augustine rising from the table beckoned Oswald to him.

"The hour," said he, "is growing late, and since the royal lady has permitted us to join her retinue, we will accompany her by the morning's light on her return to the capital of the king. Let us now withdraw, that we may be the better prepared for the morrow's early start."



Thus saying, he stretched out his hand, and giving a benediction to Queen Bertha, who knelt to receive it, he led the way from the dining-hall to the sleeping apartment, followed by Oswald and the rest of the band.

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## CHAPTER V.

### PROSPECTS OF SUCCESS.

IT was early in the morning of the day following that described in the last chapter when Augustine and his companions rose from their couches—couches composed of bundles of clean rushes strewn on the floor, for rushes were used in these early days no less for beds than for carpets. Having risen, they sang a hymn and offered up a fervent prayer that the land to which they had come might readily receive the truths of the Gospel. This over, they joined the queen and her attendants, who were already assembled in the hall where they had supped over night. Early habits were common among our ancestors, and the sun had hardly scattered the mists of dawn when the party sat down to the repast which was spread for them. Warm greetings passed between the heads of it. Augustine embraced Luidhard, and gave the queen the customary

benediction. Oswald respectfully kissed the hand of Edburge as she held it out to him, and in the meantime the royal attendants took up their places with the comrades of Augustine at the long table as on the previous night. The former were clad in the warrior dress of the period, and carried pelts or shields made of the hides of beasts. They also wore at their sides long hafted knives. The lances which they carried on the march were now for convenience piled in one corner of the hall.<sup>1</sup>

"The queen desires me to inform thee, O my Father," said Luidhard to Augustine, "that on thy arrival she sent forward a special messenger to my lord the king at his capital, acquainting him with thy coming hither. The bode has returned with the following despatch. His royal master, he says, will proceed to Reculver,<sup>2</sup> where he is now occupied in erecting a palace, and it is his pleasure that thou and all thy companions should meet him there for the purpose of holding conference, and I feel sure," continued Luidhard, "that thou wilt find a favourable reception, for among all men who acknowledge not the true God, I know

<sup>1</sup> Description derived from Camden's *Britannia* and Speed's *Britannia*.

<sup>2</sup> Regulbium of the Romans. The exact spot where S. Augustine landed is unknown. I have adopted the ordinary tradition that he landed somewhere on the Isle of Thanet, probably in Pegwell Bay.

of none who possesseth so kindly a heart or so generous a spirit as my royal master."

"This is indeed well, Luidhard," said Augustine, "Heaven is favourable to my mission, for since the day when Satan<sup>1</sup> well nigh overthrew my work at Aix in Provence, but was foiled in his malignant purpose, all has gone smoothly with me."

"Ay, and all shall go well with thee," replied Luidhard confidently. "Courage, my father! courage! for remember thou seekest not the earthly victor's crown. Be strong in the LORD, and in the power of His might. Strive thus, and striving thou shalt conquer, and by thy conquest thou shalt gain for thyself an eternal reward. But let us now attend upon the queen, for it behoves us to meet the king at Reculver while there yet remains sufficient day for the discussion he would fain hold."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CONFERENCE.

THE scene now shifts from the eastern coast of the Isle of Thanet to a little village

<sup>1</sup> This belief in the direct personal agency of the devil is strictly in keeping with the theology of the time. See

situated somewhat further north, and a short distance from the sea-shore. If the visitor to Margate should be tempted to extend his walk along the coast somewhat beyond the small hamlet of Birchington, he will see standing up boldly against the sky two lofty spires. These spires belong to the present Church of Reculver, and rising conspicuously out from the dreary flat in which they are situated, they have long served as beacons to seafaring men, amongst whom they are known by the name of the "Twin Sisters." The situation of Reculver at the present day differs somewhat from the position it occupied at the time of which I am writing. Since then the sea has encroached, and by its cruel ravages has swept away more than half-a-mile of land which in the days of Augustine served as a barrier between Reculver and its watery foe. Good grazing country has been changed to dreary waste and shingle, and thus Ocean, as if in mockery of men who bar him out with walls and dykes, seems to claim at one point the territory which he cedes at another. There is a battle ever raging betwixt nature and art, the issue of which will perhaps never be decided.

It was to this straggling seaside village that Augustine and his band, together with Queen

an account of the hindrances S. Augustine's mission met with in Alban Butler's "Lives of the Saints."

Bertha and her attendants, approached about noonday. It is not difficult to picture them to ourselves. The queen was carried in a litter, and by the side of it walked the "Apostle of England," conversing with Luidhard, and ever and anon exchanging remarks with his own followers. At a little distance behind followed another litter containing Edburge, and round it were gathered her brother, her cousin, and Oswald. Between these three an earnest conversation was kept up. Old scenes, and bygone days were recalled, and often would Oswald allude in terms of affectionate gratitude to Augustine, and speak of the happy times he had spent in the monastery at Rome, where he had been fed, clothed, and educated, and which he had learnt to call his home. Augustine, after consulting with Luidhard, and through him with Queen Bertha, had determined that on approaching the appointed place of conference they should form themselves into a religious procession. The king whose personal prowess<sup>1</sup> had given him sovereignty over all the princes of East Anglia as far north as the Humber, had determined

<sup>1</sup> "Ethelbert became most expert in war, and eventually proved so perfect a master therein, that in process of time he subdued by force of arms all those English Saxons which lay between the bounds of his country and the river of Humber." *Holinshed's Chronicles*, cap. xix.

to give audience to the mission band on a grassy plain at a little distance from the village. Beneath the wide vault of Heaven the conference was to be held ; for the king, whose mind still clung loosely to heathen superstitions, was advised by his priests and councillors that the open air was a potent charm against any magic or machination of the Evil One that might be used against him. A message had been received by him from the hands of a bode, whom Augustine had sent on to give warning of his approach. The contents of that message have been preserved for us by the great historian<sup>1</sup> of the period.

"We are come from Rome," these were the words, "and we bring the best of tidings which promise for a certainty to those who give ear unto them, eternal joys in Heaven, and a future kingdom which shall have no end with the living and true God."

To this message, the king, who was naturally prepossessed in favour of Christianity by the nobleness and piety which characterised his queen, gave ready attention, and he awaited the arrival of Augustine with an interest far deeper than mere curiosity could have prompted. In the following order marched the band which under Augustine's command was about to vanquish ignorance and unbelief. First came

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Fac ut omnis inimicus  
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The following is a fairly accurate translation in English verse of the words of this hymn :

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Peculiarly solemn was the effect of this hymn, as in all the sonorous intonation of the Latin tongue it was chanted forth by many

male voices, and it must have struck with peculiar force on the ear of the monarch, an ear attuned to nought more melodious than the war-songs of the native soldiery.

On a raised turf-seat sat the king. Behind him was ranged a guard of troops, and above his head spread far and wide in its unfathomable blue, the canopy of Heaven. No unfitting circumstance was it that the Gospel truths should *thus* be first proclaimed in our land. It seemed almost Providential that the Religion which was to fill all the world should receive its earliest proclamations in a Church whose walls were the horizon, its roof the cloudless firmament. As Augustine approached the royal presence, both he and his followers made a low obeisance. The countenance of the monarch was one which naturally commanded respect. His features were regular ; his hair, once flaxen, was now streaked with grey. When grave, his expression was perhaps somewhat stern, but it was at rare intervals that that expression was not softened by a kindly smile. Beckoning Augustine and Luidhard to come forward a little in advance of the others, he addressed himself first to Luidhard, and bade him tell Augustine to open the conference by a plain account of the Religion which he professed, while he, Luidhard, should act as interpreter.



The substance of Augustine's speech,—a speech full of deep interest for all true lovers of the Church,—may be briefly stated as follows.

First of all, he gave a short and concise account of the SAVIOUR's life and work on earth, as narrated in the Gospels, laying especial stress on such acts of Divine love and mercy, as would naturally appeal to a kindly and generous disposition. He then made a touching allusion to the sufferings and death of the "Man of Sorrows," pointing out, and contrasting the unworthiness of man, and the greatness of the sacrifice made for him. Thence he passed on to consider the chosen Twelve, dwelling on the purity and devotion of their lives, and the greatness of their works. Nor did he omit to speak of the sufferings of the early martyrs, bringing forward their endurance, as a convincing proof of the reality of that for which they were content to die, and alleging the miracles wrought by them (which it was not the custom then to deny) as a strong argument that they were aided by a Power from above. Having thus far dwelt on the historical side of Christianity, he proceeded next to show that there was no antecedent improbability in that which he asserted to be true, and then having briefly summed up the most cogent arguments in favour of

Christianity, he made a fervent appeal to the monarch to delay no longer, but to embrace at once a faith which while it was eminently mysterious was yet perfectly rational and consistent, and which was the foundation on which was built up all good government, the fountain from which flowed down the prosperity of nations.<sup>1</sup>

To all this Ethelbert listened with rapt attention. He could not fail to be impressed by the earnestness of the speaker, he could not help acknowledging the reasonableness and truth of his words. His reply was not unworthy of a great heathen prince, on whose mind still obscured by the shades of unbelief, the light of truth was beginning to dawn.

"Fair indeed," said he, "are the words and promises which ye bring me, but seeing that they are new and untried, I cannot give in my adherence to them, and desert the faith which I have so long cultivated in common with all the English race.<sup>2</sup> But seeing that ye are pilgrims from afar, and that ye are desirous, as I perceive, to communicate to me these things

<sup>1</sup> In this speech I have endeavoured to popularise one of the ordinary "Apologies" for Christianity, and to put into Augustine's mouth such arguments as under the circumstances he would have been most *likely* to employ.

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which ye believe to be both excellent and true, I will not throw any hindrance in your way, but will rather receive you with friendly hospitality, and will take care to provide you with all things needful to your support, nor do I prohibit you from joining to your faith any whom ye are able to win over by your preaching."

Such was the reply of King Ethelbert, and surely it is a reply deserving our closest attention. In these days when in the face of boasted tolerance of opinions, religious bitterness is so rife, we might look in quarters more enlightened for sentiments as generous, as noble as these, and yet look in vain.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### SUNSHINE AND CLOUDS.

THUS ended the conference between the Apostle of England and the heathen prince, and from it Augustine augured the happiest results. He could not but admire the wisdom and discretion which guided the king's words, and in the caution with which alone he would accept Christianity, he beheld the spirit which was in the hearts of the Be-

oceans, and which led them "to search the Scriptures diligently to see if the things were so."<sup>1</sup> That caution moreover he felt gave promise of greater steadfastness in holding the truth when once it was embraced. Lastly, Augustine felt very grateful for the kindness which had been shown him, and for the promise not only of toleration towards his faith, but even of the favour and protection of the court.

Edburge, with her mother, had been a silent but attentive listener of Augustine's words as they were interpreted by Luidhard to the king, and she hailed with secret joy Ethelbert's favourable reply. At the conclusion of the conference, and as the mission band was about to withdraw, Edburge beckoned Oswald to her, and the two walked a little apart.

"Ah, my friend of early days," she said, "my good father has promised thee a home in the royal city,<sup>2</sup> and so thou art to dwell hard by where so much of our childhood was passed. We shall meet, and that I trust often, for I would fain hear more of thy words, and would have recounted to me again thy tale of yesternight."

"Yes," replied Oswald; "thy father has indeed been most gracious to us in permitting

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Canterbury—the Saxon Cantwarabyrig.

us to settle in his capital, and I pray that it may be no long time ere he see fit to embrace openly those truths which we have this day made known to him. And, Edburge, most gentle maiden," he continued, "since thou scornest not to recall to mind those days of childish innocence when as playmates together we spoke with freedom unrestrained, I pray thee let me speak now as if those days were still present to us—as if I was the child, not the man. Edburge, wilt thou hear me?"

She bowed assent, and pausing for an instant said: "I will do so, and with gladness; and that we may speak together with less reserve, I will dismiss my attendant. Let us bend our steps towards the sea, away from the turmoil and confusion of the camp." So saying, they turned in the direction of the shore, and for some minutes neither spoke. There were deep thoughts locked in the breasts of each which sought for utterance and found it not.

At last Edburge, when they found themselves without the outposts of the camp, turning to Oswald said,

"I would fain hear more of Him whom thou callest the 'Man of Sorrows.' I love to hear tell of acts of mercy and kindness. I love too those martyrs of whom my dear mother speaks with such reverence, whose lives were spent

for others, and who were so brave that not even death could terrify them."

"Oh, Edburge," cried Oswald, "forgive me if I speak with too great a freedom, but when I first met thee yester-evening, all the tender interest was awakened in me which is but natural when friends in childhood meet again after years of long separation. Happy was I in the companionship of many holy Fathers at Rome : there I dwelt under the care of one who has been to me more than a parent. I was brought into Holy Church's Communion, and I lived a peaceful life apart from worldly cares. I say I was happy. Had I not been so I should have been indeed ungrateful ; and yet ever and anon in the secrecy of my chamber there would steal over me one saddening thought. My heart would cross the seas to the land of my birth, and it would grieve me to think of many a soul living *there* in ignorance of those truths which had been to me the source of all my joy ; and then when the holy Gregory was stirred by the Spirit to send a mission into this land, and Augustine was appointed to be its leader, how my heart leapt for joy ! How earnestly I prayed that I might be deemed worthy to be of the number ; and all through the long and weary travel through France, in the midst of all the doubt and uncertainty which gathered like clouds around us,

ever *my* heart yearned toward my kinsfolk, and the companions of my youth. Led by these thoughts which no danger could alarm, I was ever the first to counsel perseverance ; ever the first to say in the eagerness of my soul, ‘ for the sake of CHRIST let us press on to the field of our labours ;’ and then when I met thee, and all the remembrance of my childhood’s happiness rushed uncontrollable like a flood upon my soul, the prayer of my spirit was, ‘ Oh, if she would be the first to partake of my joys ! oh, if she would be but our helper in teaching others, what a glorious consummation would this be of all my hopes ! ’ ”

He paused, his countenance flushed with the burning zeal and enthusiasm ever inseparable from youth pleading in a noble cause.

And Edburge had caught something of that enthusiasm. The spark was alight ; it wanted but a breath to kindle it into flame. She said, and with emotion,

“ Thou art kind to speak to me thus ; thou hast my happiness at heart. Thou wouldst have me embrace thy faith ? ”

“ Ay,” continued Oswald, “ it is indeed my wish ; nay more, it is my earnest prayer. I wish, and that with greater earnestness than words can express, that thou, and not thou alone, but all thy father’s house, should embrace that faith. Wast thou not moved by

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Peculiarly solemn was the effect of this hymn, as in all the sonorous intonation of the Latin tongue it was chanted forth by many

“Edburge,” said Oswald, “this is to me a day of happiness and of joy unspeakable. The truth prevails, and wheresoever it penetrates it scatters to the wind prejudice and error; and now I know not whether I ought so to do, but oh, pardon my presumption—if presumption it seems to thee to be!—let me add one word. Since we met yester-evening all the affection of older days has returned fuller and stronger—yes, deepened into the love of manhood. I love thee, Edburge: with love which words fail me to express. Do I wrong thee in saying this? If so, may I remain for ever mute on this subject; yea, though by silence I should wrong myself. Think of me as one who would sacrifice every worldly wish for thee—who would live for thee; and gladly, if need be, would die for thee. There were but two barriers between us,—one thou hast this moment broken down by thy noble acceptance of the true faith. The other, thy royal descent. Is that an obstacle not to be surmounted? May not time, and my sword wielded in thy father’s service; may not deeds of valour and exploits won, atone for the fault of a humble parentage, and prove me not unworthy of thy hand? Edburge, say at least that I may hope, and that hoping, I may live for thee.”

She answered not, but the silent pressure of

the hand emboldened him to proceed. "May I interpret for thee the silence which constrains thee? Thou wilt not dash my hopes to the ground—thou wilt let me love—thy looks encourage me. Say, oh say, but one word—that thou wilt be mine."

Edburge now softly answered, raising her eyes to his, her voice tremulous with suppressed emotion :

"Dearest, thou knowest not all; there are ties which bind us to one another, our childhood passed together, our faith, our zeal for one object, and then to speak to others of heaven and the true God. Oh, what a glorious future! and to be with thee always, and ever to have thy guidance: but—"

"But what?" he asked tenderly.

"Oh!" she continued in a broken voice, "oh that it might be; but indeed—indeed it cannot. Thou knowest not that my father has promised me in marriage to my cousin Sered. It is his will, and could I disregard it? Never! It is for the parent to command, for the child to obey. Let me not murmur at what fate decrees; nor ever may I disobey the mandate of a loving father."

"But oh, Edburge, tell me but this; dost thou love him whom thou art engaged to wed? Thou dost not. I know that it is so. Thy father will never give thy hand where thou

male voices, and it must have struck with peculiar force on the ear of the monarch, an ear attuned to nought more melodious than the war-songs of the native soldiery.

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THUS ended the conference between the Apostle of England and the heathen prince, and from it Augustine augured the happiest results. He could not but admire the wisdom and discretion which guided the king's words, and in the caution with which alone he would accept Christianity, he beheld the spirit which was in the hearts of the Be-

sufficed for the worshippers on ordinary occasions, would hold scarcely half of those who from curiosity, or some higher motive, were now anxious to gain admittance, and as the royal procession approached the doors, it required all the efforts of the soldiery to clear a way for it into the Church.

As is common enough now in churches, though it was not so common twenty or thirty years ago, the font was placed on the left hand side of the western entrance. In this particular case, it stood in a recess which formed the baptistery. It is not difficult to see the reasons for this position of the font. The candidates are not to be introduced further than need be into the church, the home of the regenerate, *until* they have been born again, and washed white in the Sacred Flood. This consideration establishes at once the impropriety of placing the font anywhere save at the entrance of the church.

The king having on his left hand the queen, on his right hand Luidhard, took his place by the font. Behind him stood his son, and further back still the members of his retinue. Augustine, tall and stately, yet gentle and loving in expression, took up his station at the font, and the service, simple, but telling, in its beautiful symbolism, then commenced.

"Dost thou renounce," said Augustine to

the king, "dost thou renounce the devil and the evil works of darkness?"

The king made answer, turning his face to the west, the region of darkness and sunset, "I renounce Satan and all his works."

Then came a declaration from the postulant for baptism of his willingness to live in accordance with the laws of God.

"I give myself up to Thee, O CHRIST, to be governed by Thy laws."

And as he repeated these words he turned himself till he faced the east, the region of the rising sun, emblem of the Sun of Righteousness, who shall arise with healing in His wings, and in that position, and standing (a posture of determination) he recited after Augustine the simple form of the Western Creed.

Then came the baptism itself, performed not as now by the sprinkling of water, but by immersion of the whole body, after which the king arose out of the font, "new born of water and the Spirit," and put on the white robes, which symbolised the purity of the newly baptized. After this he received unction with the anointing oil or chrism, the sign of the cross was made on his forehead, and then he took his place amongst the faithful in the body of the church. Thus concluded the sacramental rite, the outlines of whose form are clearly to be traced in our own baptismal office.

Augustine then ascended the pulpit, and casting his quick eye round upon the congregation who thronged the building, he began an impassioned address. He bade those who had been spectators of the sacred rite just performed consider well its solemn meaning. He spoke of the willing submission of the earthly prince to a Monarch Whose Kingdom is not of this world. He spoke also of those whom baptism makes kings and priests unto God, and lastly reminded his hearers of the king's wish—(it was a wish, not a command, for Ethelbert would rather have his subjects the servants, than the slaves of God)—that all his people should enlist under the banner of CHRIST.

Deeply impressed with the fervour of the preacher, the congregation slowly dispersed. Many who had come only to see the sight and gaze in idle curiosity upon the "Apostle from Rome," had their hearts touched. The expressive rite they had witnessed, still more the fervent words they had heard, had sunk deep down into the souls of many of those who for the first time that day had trodden the pavement of S. Martin's. The seed had been sown. It needed but God's fostering care, united to that power which is latent in every human soul, to quicken that seed into the fulness of life. Surely eloquence is a vast,

incomprehensible force, influencing hearts, even the most unsympathising, and giving birth to motives which may work through countless generations. After the service was over the royal party withdrew to the palace, where a repast was spread at which all the principal persons who had taken part in the service, were present.

It was during this meal that the king happened to mention to Augustine the betrothal of his daughter to Sered.

"In this marriage," said Ethelbert, "I hope to join in a firm alliance the two nations who hold in their hands the destinies of southern England. In Sered's character there is much to admire: he is bold in battle, merciful, they tell me, in victory. He loves Edburge as warriors should ever love their ladies. In short, he is one altogether worthy of my daughter's hand."

Edburge, who was sitting close by her father, felt a tremor run through her frame as she heard these words. She did not trust herself to speak, lest her voice should betray the emotions she strove to suppress. She could not help casting a furtive glance at Oswald, and was rejoiced to discover that he had not caught the substance of the king's remarks.

"Hath he embraced the truth?" asked Augustine, referring to Sered. "I fear no alli-

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Edburge, who was sitting close by her father, felt a tremor through her frame as she heard the king's words. She trusted herself to speak, and in the emotions she felt she could not help casting a glance at him, and he seemed to divine her intention. He turned towards her, and she saw that his eyes were fixed on her. She felt that she was the object of his gaze, and she knew that he was looking at her with a gaze of deep interest.

grand festival was to take place in a certain temple called Upsola, situated not far from Thorney, the ancient Westminster.<sup>1</sup> The service which we are now to witness was not a service to recall the great sad scene on Calvary, but a commemoration in honour of three deities whom the Saxons worshipped : Thor, the god of thunder, Woden, the god of war, and Frisco, the god of pleasure. Before this temple were now assembled a large and anxious crowd, for as yet but few of the common people had been led to embrace Christianity. The building within was calculated by its splendour to impose on the senses of the worshippers. The wood of its internal fittings was richly overlaid with gold. In front of the crowd which was waiting at the doors, stood the three young princes, Sered, Seward, and Sigebert, conspicuous alike for the haughtiness of their bearing, and the magnificence of their robes. They were present as faithful devotees at the shrine of their gods ; but this was not only the cause which led to their attendance there. In connection with the religious function about to take place was a ceremony of no mean importance. The three youths, knowing that on their father's death they should jointly succeed to his kingdom,

<sup>1</sup> Hints for the following sketch were suggested by Adam Bremensis, as quoted by Speed.

had determined to ascertain by casting lots (a Saxon custom) which portion of it should fall to the share of each.

"Seward," whispered Seread to his brother, "the gods are ever propitious to me. Be sure that to me will fall the royal town of London, and right well shall I rule it, with her by my side who will be the fairest queen that ever sat upon Saxon throne."

"Be not over-confident," muttered Seward. "If the gods assign unto thee the noblest part of the kingdom, (and I pray that they may rather allot it to me,) dost thou suppose that they will award thee Edburge also as thy bride? Perceivest thou not that Ethelbert, who is blinded by this novel superstition, will never give daughter of his to one who worships mighty Woden, or pleasure-loving Frisco?"

"What is thy contention now?" interposed Sigebert. "Do ye think because I am the youngest the gods will therefore not see fit to make me chief over the kingdom? Their eyes are not so dull as yours, and they know who is best fitted to hold the sceptre."

"And they will not be likely to choose thee, then," rejoined the other brother, scornfully. "Thy mind is as puny as thy arm. The one can scarce frame a counsel for the battle, nor hath the other the strength to hurl spear, or let fly arrow from the bow."

Words were growing warm, and to what consequences the dispute might have led, it is impossible to say, but at this moment the doors of the temple were thrown open, and the crowd, surging behind, bore the princes forward, and gave them no further opportunity for continuing the discussion.

The temple was a circular building, and in the centre were placed the statues of the three deities. On a couch, and in a reclining posture, was the image of Thor, and on either side of him were reared the images of Woden and Frisco. In honour of the day these statues were crowned with garlands and chaplets, and fresh flowers strewed the pavement at their feet. So soon as the three princes had taken up the places allotted to them, and the remainder of the crowd had found standing-room, so far as the dimensions of the building permitted them to do so, the service commenced. Curiosity, and the grandeur of the spectacle had no doubt attracted some of those present, but not a few of them had come in the spirit of true worshippers. The dress of the men was a kind of mantle<sup>1</sup> clasped at the neck, which clasp, in the case of the poorer sort, was often a large thorn.<sup>2</sup> The habit of the women differed but

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus. It was called "sagum."

<sup>2</sup> Description of dress and other details borrowed from Sneed's *Britannia*.

slightly from that of the men. They wore, however, an under-garment or tunic of white linen, frequently trimmed, and interlaced with purple. The men, one and all, wore their beards long, and had their hair curled, or fastened in knots on their heads. Their weapon was for the most part the long-hafted knife, which hung suspended from the girdle round their waists. Such was the appearance and dress of our ancestors who took part in this act of Pagan worship, and now the service commences. Amidst clouds of incense offered up by the priests, the princes, and such of the people as could come near, fervent prayers and invocations were made; the chief of the priests speaking in the name of those assembled. As the words of supplication were uttered a thrill of religious terror ran through the vast congregation. All knelt with bowed heads and hushed voices, as words solemn in sound, but all too meaningless, were addressed to the idols of wood and stone. When the act of worship was completed, the half-religious, half-political part of the day's proceedings began. On a grass plat, confronting the principal door of the temple, the chief actors in this strange scene took their places. First came the three princes ranged in line, and in front of them, holding a cloth of the size and substance of a coarse blanket, was placed the

priest who was to act as umpire in the controversy about to be decided by lot.

In this blanket were put the lots, which were simply the fruit of a tree, three of which had stamped upon them marks to indicate the portion of the inheritance which was to be assigned to the drawers. As the priest shook these lots up together in the blanket, he gathered up the four corners of it, so as to form a bag. This he did with prayers and incantations, invoking the deities to look down upon the brothers and guide their hands. Sered the oldest was the first to draw, then Seward, and lastly Sigebert, and it was with an air of triumph and defiance that Seward drew forth the lot which made him possessor of his father's capital.

"Ha, brothers mine," said he, "yours be the fair brides, but 'twill be mine to confer the princely dower. Go thou, Sered, with thy vaunted bride, and rule the northern men, where the fens and marishes scarce yield keep for the sheep that graze there."

Sered ground his teeth with rage. Bold as well as ambitious, his soul had longed for the lot which should confer on him superiority over his brothers. In his heart he had secretly indulged the hope that a time would come when he should compel them to acknowledge him as universal sovereign.

Sigebert and Sered having drawn their respective lots, and proclamation having been made to the assembled people, all dispersed, and the ceremony was at an end. One man only lingered behind. He had been a silent spectator of the idolatrous worship. No religious zeal, nor idle curiosity had brought him there. He had gazed with mingled contempt and pity on the sight he had witnessed. Far back and unobserved he had watched the proceedings, and over his face played the smile of scorn. His dress was that of a missionary, and such indeed he was: one sent by Augustine from Canterbury to undertake the spiritual guidance of the king, who together with a small knot of settlers, formed the little band of worshippers of the true God in the kingdom of the East Saxons.

Gathering the folds of his mantle around him, and muttering the words, "Confounded be all they that worship carved images," the missionary with firm step, and indignant mien, took his way towards the royal court.

"Do we not read," said he to himself, "concerning Eli, how he was rebuked by God for not restraining the idolatrous practices of his sons? and great was the punishment his disobedience entailed upon him! Does it not behove me, like a second Samuel, to warn the royal father that God will not forgive the in-

dulgence with which he treats his pagan sons?"

With these thoughts rising up in his heart, Clissold, for that was the missionary's name, proceeded with hasty steps towards the king's palace situated in Thorney Island, and without ceremony, as one privileged, he sought instant admission to the royal presence.

"Most gracious lord and master," he began abruptly, so soon as he found himself alone with the king, "I thy poor priest and servant, whom in spite of my unworthiness God hath appointed to make known unto thee the way of salvation; I, in the name of Him whom I preach, can no longer keep silence. In yonder temple, dedicated to heathen gods, who are the representatives of blood-stained violence and sinful pleasure, thy three sons have performed their crowning act of pagan superstitions. Not content with decking their false idols with garlands, and praying to the lifeless stocks midst the smoke of incense and the gibberings of their priests, they have this day been casting lots, with senseless prayers and incantations, to decide, O king, which portion of the kingdom at thy decease shall fall to each of them."

The monarch's brow darkened. Treason and idolatry seemed to him to have joined



"How sayest thou, good Clissold? Tell me where did all this happen?"

"At the temple called in thy tongue Upsola, most gracious sovereign."

"And how? dost thou tell me that many of my subjects were present to witness this worship of which thou speakest?"

"They came, O king, as ever the thoughtless crowd will come to behold pageants which are gaudy and shows which are novel. Too well do I know that thy sons will exercise all the influence which they possess to keep thy people subject to that idolatry which thou thyself hast learnt well to scorn—"

As he uttered these words the door burst unceremoniously open, and the three princes themselves entered.

Clissold, as their father's spiritual adviser, was not unknown to them, and as the mainstay of the new religion which they abhorred, he was the object of their deadliest hatred.

Hasty was the step with which the Princes advanced, and wild the look with which they glared upon their father and the priest. At length Sered, fastening his eyes upon Clissold, exclaimed,

"How now, O my father? Is there no hour of the day when thy sons can find thee unattended by this mawkish priest, this

preacher of lies, this worshipper of the crucified man ?”<sup>1</sup>

“Out upon thee for thy insolence, beardless youth,” replied the king. “Thinkest thou that I know not whence thou and thy brothers are come, from burning incense and offering prayers to idols only one degree more senseless than yourselves, and from hatching treason against your own father ? Why love ye ignorance rather than truth ? Ye are birds of the night, and therefore the light is hateful to you, and ye love only the darkness.”

Fury glittered in the eyes of Sered ; his very limbs trembled with passion. He answered, glaring upon Clissold,

“So it is thou, dog, who hast been playing the spy upon us, who hast filled the ears of the king our father with thy lies. But thou shalt pay for this ; not all the maudlin tenderness of my father, not all the love which thou hast stolen by thy base perfidy from my mother shall save thee from direful vengeance of the gods.”

“Gods !” answered Clissold, with the bitterest scorn, for his bravery outran his discretion—“Gods ! much indeed have I to fear from those powerless stocks of wood and stone !”

Ere the words were out of his mouth, Sered,

<sup>1</sup> The taunt of Julian the Apostate here reproduced.

forgetful of the presence in which he stood, sprang forward in rage ungovernable, and with the gripe of the tiger seized Clissold by the throat. The victim made one desperate effort to free himself; the king leapt forward; the brothers, mute with terror and amazement, stood motionless. The long-hafted knife was swept from the belt of Sered, and ere the father could wrest it from the hand of his son, its blade hurtled for an instant in the air, and then was buried deep in the heart of the preacher of the Gospel.

Falling in dying anguish at the feet of his murderer, his life-blood staining the robe of the prince, he lifted his glazing eyes to Heaven, and then in a voice low and distinct, but soon to be hushed for ever amid the convulsions of death, he uttered words gentler and sweeter than any which in the fulness of life and hope had passed his lips—"LORD, lay not this sin to their charge."

The elbow on which he rested sank from beneath him, the eyes fixed for ever, and Clissold, the follower of JESUS, faithful unto death, fell backward a lifeless corpse.

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## CHAPTER XI.

## TRUE LOVE.

**A**FTER the events recorded in the last chapter we must leave this scene of heathen violence, and return once more to the gentler climate, the purer atmosphere of the Court of Ethelbert.

News of the murder of the missionary by the hands of one whom he had destined to be his son-in-law, had not failed to reach this prince's ears, and had caused him to come to the resolution which it is the purpose of this chapter to unfold.

The life which the mission band was leading at Canterbury had now become one of unbroken regularity in the performance of domestic visiting and acts of worship. The baptism of Ethelbert, together with his expressed wish, had been the means of bringing many into the fold of the Church. As on the first Whitsun Day, so now it could be said that the "HOLY SPIRIT was adding to the Church such as should be saved." This influx of converts gave Augustine and his comrades ample occupation, and even had Oswald not found solace for his hidden grief in his religious duties, the press of work gave him but little time to brood over his sorrow. Au-

gustine and his band continued to inhabit the house which had been allotted to them by the king, and there they dwelt under a kind of rule, simple and convenient, enabling them to discharge their duties with greater method. They took their meals together in a kind of refectory, they worshipped daily in the church of S. Martin, and further, kept the Canonical hours of prayer, which had been instituted in the earliest days of the Church.<sup>1</sup> By living thus together with Augustine as their head, the missionaries found that they could carry on their work far more effectively than would have been possible had they frittered away their strength in disconnected efforts. While some were engaged in training converts for baptism, and instructing them in the tenets of the faith, others took the more active part of preaching, or gave themselves to what may be termed a system of parochial visiting,<sup>2</sup> whereby they were enabled to acquire the good will and

<sup>1</sup> The exact date we are ignorant of. These hours were Lauds, Prime, Tierce (at nine o'clock), Sexts (at noon), Nones (at three), Vespers and Compline (before retiring to rest). In the Anglo-Saxon period (cir. A. D. 1000) these were called respectively uhtsang, primesang, undersang, middaysang, noonsang, evensang, and night-sang. See Procter, *Common Prayer*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> This expression contains an anachronism, since parochial divisions were not made till the Archiepiscopate of Theodore, A. D. 668. See Robertson's *Church History*, vol. ii., p. 76.

sympathy of the people, and at the same time to confirm them in the faith they had received.

Having spoken somewhat at length of the way in which Augustine and his followers lived and laboured at Canterbury when the truth had once established for itself a firm hold on the people, I will ask the reader to accompany me towards the Royal Palace on a day not long subsequent to the murder of the missionary Clissold by the hand of Sered.

There are two persons making their way in the direction of the palace ; the one older and more dignified than the other ; the face of the one overshadowed with care, while that of the other is radiant with calm joy. These two are Augustine and Oswald. Very earnest is their conversation, and deep is the attention of Augustine while his foster son confides to him the secret of his life.

“ My son,” said Augustine, “ I do not reproach thee for thy silence, nay, rather I honour thee for it. Thou didst right to respect the feelings of her whom thou so tenderly lovest, and in striving to overcome an attachment which seemed hopeless by prayer and devotion to God, thou actedst the part of a faithful disciple, who bears the cross willingly, hoping ere long to wear the eternal crown. But now that the obstacle is removed, now that the king has released his daughter from

an engagement which neither God nor His holy Church could sanction, thou art free to prefer thy suit,—and may be the king will entrust to thy hands which are free from the blood of all men, the daughter whom he could not but withhold from the shedder of innocent blood.”

Scarcely had the holy father uttered these words, when there came forth from a side-door of the palace the maiden who had been the subject of his remarks. Edburge approached towards them : she knelt before Augustine to receive his blessing, and then she turned her eyes towards her lover,—eyes which said far more than words could have expressed.

“I must leave you for a space,” said Augustine, “as I would fain see thy father, Edburge, to ask him concerning the heathen temple<sup>1</sup> which he promised to allot us as a place of sepulture for our dead.” With these words Augustine turned away and left the lovers by themselves.

Edburge was the first to speak, and turning to Oswald, she said, “God is very merciful; God overrules all things for good to them that love Him.”

“Edburge, dearest one,” answered Oswald,

<sup>1</sup> Afterwards the church of S. Pancras, to which Ethelbert added “a most fair monasterie.” Speed’s *Britannia*, chap. xviii. This monastery plays an important part in the tale I am narrating.

"I know all: thy father has withdrawn thy hand from him who is the slayer of the innocent. Now at least I am free to speak. No longer need the flame of my love be quenched beneath the achings of this heart: I may go to my royal master with a tale of that love which in the midst of silent suffering has only gained for itself fresh strength."

"Oswald," whispered Edburge, "it is true, my release has come,—not all the love for his kingdom, nor all the proud hopes he had formed, could bring my father to unite me to the man whom I never loved, and who has now called down upon himself the execration of all just persons. Much as my father loved his power, he loved his daughter more: with all the nobleness of his nature he said to me this morning, 'Never will I purchase aught of worldly prosperity at the cost of my daughter's happiness, or at any risk to the true faith.'"

"Oh, Edburge," said Oswald, "these words fill my breast with joy unspeakable. Oh, how wonderful hath been the favour shown to us. Truly it is as thou sayest, 'God overruleth everything for good.'"

Yes, how true those words were! how true they are ever! It is often a very different overruling from what we had pictured to ourselves. The overruling of sickness, of sorrow, of separation,—how dark it would all seem if



we knew it beforehand, but when we read the providence of God only in the after events, how wonderfully wise and beneficent that providence always appears.

Were these words of Oswald an augury of his future destiny? were they the shadow of coming events, a shadow so lightly cast in the noonday sun of present happiness, as scarcely to bear witness to any substance behind?

Be this as it may, these words were uttered once, and only once, again.

How bright and happy seemed the future which now floated before the eyes of the lovers; they doubted not that the king would look with favour on their attachment. Their love was in itself so pure and holy that it did not obscure the love of God; nay, the earthly love seemed but a reflection of the Divine, it was as a ray of light emitted from Him concerning whom it is written, "God is Love."

And hand in hand they sat long, dreaming over the joy that awaited them, of the good they would do, of the zeal they would display in spreading the true faith, in a word, of all the interests which lovers ever have in common, interests which in their case were chastened, and ennobled by their mutual devotion to the cause of CHRIST.

At last Oswald arose to go, and as he looked into the tender eyes of the maiden he said,

"I must now bid thee a farewell, a farewell longer than I could have desired, for I had all but forgotten to tell thee that the good father has been commanded to seek consecration at the hands of the Bishop of Arles, and it is his wish that I should accompany him. Do not be cast down," he added, as a cloud overshadowed the face of Edburge, "'Tis not a parting for long. If God be pleased to give us a prosperous journey, but few months will pass ere I shall be restored to thee again,—and then, dearest, we can remain united for ever, nothing need separate us then, no, not even death, for death hath no separation for those that love CHRIST." Gently disengaging his arm from the embrace in which he was holding her, he bent over the face of Edburge, and as he imprinted one kiss on her brow he said, "Thy father leaves his capital to-day for Reculver, and with to-morrow's light we set out for Arles, and our road to the coast will take us through Reculver. There will I tarry to see my gracious sovereign. I will tell him the story of my love,—and oh, Edburge, I feel sure he will never withhold his consent. Then think no more, I pray thee, of the separation, the time will be so short; a few weeks or even months of waiting, what is that, when they are passed in anticipation of such happiness as will be ours!"

Thus Oswald uttered his last farewell. The words were spoken in tones of forced gaiety. When next they met, their greeting was one of sober joy.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### A PILGRIMAGE IN THE OLDEN TIME.

AS Oswald had said, the journey which he was about to undertake in company with S. Augustine, led them through the village of Reculver, where one scene in this story has already been laid. In fact, the road that they were to traverse was the same one by which they had made their first triumphal entry into the city of Canterbury. It was noon when they reached Reculver, where as I have before mentioned King Ethelbert was at this time engaged in the erection of a palace. Oswald had begged of Augustine to allow a sojourn of a few hours here in order that he might be able to obtain an interview with the king.

It was in the following words that the young missionary preferred his suit so soon as he found himself in the royal presence.

"Most gracious master," he began; "it is with the deepest humility, and not without fear, that I am come to make a request at thy

hands. . I feel that I am not worthy of that which I would fain ask, and if thou shouldst see fit to deny me what my lips desire, at least withdraw not from me thy favour."

"Speak on," said the king. "I who have received from thee and thy band so great gifts, am not likely to refuse aught that thou askest at my hands."

These words emboldened Oswald to proceed.

"Thou art too good," he said, "to thy unworthy servant. It is of thy daughter, Edburge, that I would fain speak?"

"Of my daughter?" said the king, inquiringly. "Of Edburge, what of her?"

"Most gracious master, may be, thou knowest it not, but since the day that thy daughter, Edburge, became a Christian, our hearts have been knit together in bands of love's own riveting. Yes; we are one in heart and soul, and though I knew that it was thy will that the princess should wed with one her equal in rank, and to whom she was betrothed, I still clung to hope, the anchor of the soul. Hope, faint and dim, was all that I had, for not one word of tenderness would I breathe to her who was affianced to another. Not a thought should shape itself into words which might encourage faithlessness to plighted troth. Yes; for weeks I have striven to subdue the fire of love by which I was consumed. In silence I

have fought, and in silence I have conquered ; but now, since I have heard from Augustine, my good father, nay more, from the lips of Edburge herself, that thou hast of thy own free will, cancelled the engagement which thou hadst formed, and unwilling that she, the daughter of a Christian prince, should wed with one whose hands were stained with the blood of the Christian priest, hast left her free to wed the man of her own choice ; I, O king, though but a poor thegn, and conscious of my unworthiness of one far nobler and purer than myself ; yet dare to prefer my suit, trusting only in the love I bear thy daughter, which love, if thou couldst but know it, would not shame the highest prince in all this island."

The king listened patiently. At length he answered, after a moment's pause, "Oswald, thy words take me not altogether by surprise. Both I and my queen had observed in Edburge signs of affection which were not fixed upon him whom we had chosen as her husband. If aught of worldly ambition prompted me to promote that marriage, and I shrink not from confessing that so it was, that wish, which was born of the world and of Satan rather than of God, has now passed away. Never indeed could I link my daughter's hand to that of the murderer—never could I bid her share the couch of one who was an open enemy to the

cause of CHRIST. In thee, Oswald, I see piety and courage; I see true nobility of soul; I see further, that the love which thou bearest for my daughter is a love as true as it is pure. If then she accepts thee as her husband thou wilt have my blessing, and together with my most loving consort I will welcome thee as a son born to my old age."

Such was the modest manner in which Oswald preferred his request, and such the gracious answer which he received from the king. How great was his joy, as he kissed the hand which Ethelbert extended to him, or how deep his gratitude for so mighty a favour shown him by the greatest of England's princes, words could ill express. Suffice it to say that there was not a brighter smile or a lighter heart than were Oswald's in all the little band which accompanied Augustine.

In a half-decked vessel, manned by skilful rowers, the Apostle of England swiftly sped across that channel, hard by which the opening scene of this story is laid. He did not disdain to traverse sea and land in order to receive at the hands of a successor of the Apostles gifts and graces, which he knew could only flow through God's appointed channels. Neither difficulty nor danger could shake the faithful obedience of one who felt the truth of the Apostle's words, "How shall they preach except

they be sent?"<sup>1</sup> And how different were the feelings with which he made the present voyage from those which had filled his heart when, for the first time, he neared the shores of England. Then all lay dark and uncertain before him. What the future might be he dared not attempt to forecast; but now all was changed. The battle had been fought, the victory won, and he himself was on his way to receive a fuller measure of Divine grace whereby he might be enabled to bring his work to perfection. Such thoughts as these sustained Augustine and his devoted followers through many days of weary travelling, chiefly on foot, which awaited them ere they reached their journey's end. The only sojourn of any length that they made was at Paris, where Augustine had an interview with the Bishop, at that time presiding over the Church there, and gladdened his heart with an account of the success which their work in England had met with. From Bruneheld, the then reigning sovereign, he received marks of favour and letters of introduction ensuring him protection, and such hospitality as was obtainable in the provinces through which he was to pass.<sup>2</sup> On quitting

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 15.

<sup>2</sup> On the death of Fredegonde in 596, Bruneheld, regent of Austrasia, seized the kingdom of Paris. It is recorded of her that she helped Augustine on his way to

Paris the travellers journeyed on steadily, stopping only when needful for food and rest, and without misadventure they arrived in due course within a short distance of the city whither they were bound.

Arles was one of the most ancient as well as one of the most important cities of ancient Gaul. In the time of Ausonius it is described in language no less complimentary than this : "Arles the Gallic Rome."<sup>1</sup> And although since the fourth century its material prosperity had no doubt declined as the fortunes of the whole Roman Empire waned, still its ecclesiastical position as Metropolitan See of Southern France gave it an importance which grew with the growth and spread of the Church. It was on a winter's evening that Augustine and his companions approached the termination of their long journey, but one of those winter's evenings, when a bright setting sun imparts almost a summer glow to the country around, bringing out into bold relief the network of twigs on the leafless trees, and bathing with floods of light the far-stretching fields which seem to be at rest ere they commence the labours of another spring. On such an evening

Arles, and received a letter of commendation from S. Gregory, notwithstanding that she had been guilty of murder.

<sup>1</sup> Gallula Roma Arelas.



it was that Augustine stood and gazed upon the lovely scenery of Southern France. Far away in the east were reared the lofty crests of the Alpine range now purpling in the sunset, while conspicuous in the foreground stood up bold and clear against the sky, the cathedral dedicated to S. Trophimus. Next to the cathedral the most prominent feature in the landscape was the amphitheatre<sup>1</sup> (not then, as now, a ruin,) which stood like an angry and silent witness of a power which it could not control, and by which it was destined to be crushed. Still grand and stately this relic of ignorant cruelty seemed to rear its head aloft in defiance of the mightier and more benign influences of the Church which towered above it. Somewhat to the north of the city of Arles, the western branch of the Rhone diverges from the main stream, and runs at a short distance without its walls. At this point we must imagine the travellers to have arrived, and we must picture them leaning against the parapet of the bridge by which the river is crossed, and gazing with unrestrained admiration upon the scene which my pen has so feebly attempted to depict.

"Observe," said Augustine to his companions, "what the spread of truth has done

<sup>1</sup> This amphitheatre was larger even than that at Nîmes.

wherever it has penetrated. Yonder amphitheatre, once the scene of barbaric cruelty, remains only as a silent protest against ignorance and inhumanity which have now passed away. Contrast its deserted walls with the crowded aisles of the Church beside it, and see in them the glorious triumph which truth has achieved over error. Truth must prevail in the end, whether it be preached to polished Roman or untutored Saxon. The truth is one, while error, like the hydra, has its hundred heads; notwithstanding ere many centuries have passed away every phase of error shall be cast into shadow by the glory of that truth concerning which, One greater than man has said, 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

"Let us then take courage, Oswald, we are but humble members of that great society to which we belong; like waves, some greater some less, each borne irresistibly onward to the unfathomable ocean of God's love, but still, small as is the part allotted to us in the work, we can each do something, and leave the results to God."

"Yes," replied Oswald, "we cannot do much, and yet we can obey the Preacher's injunction, and that which our hand findeth to do, we can do with our might. God hath been very merciful in crowning our labours thus far. Surely,

father, thy safe arrival in this city is only a further proof of divine favour."

"True, my son," answered Augustine, "God hath been very gracious in leading the wandering Saxon into the fold of His Church, but we must not expect to find all our way alike smooth and easy. God will reveal unto us His Will, and give us His Blessing, and yet that Will may carry us into dark places, and assign us tasks which, in our own unaided strength, we were powerless to fulfil."

As he uttered these words, the little band found themselves entering the narrow and winding streets of the old city. Threading several of these, they at length reached the door of the Bishop's palace, and there met with the ready welcome they had expected, for as they knew, intelligence of their journey had been brought to the Bishop from the Court of Gregory at Rome.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### INVESTITURE WITH THE PALL.

**F**OR some days after their arrival Augustine and his companions remained in quiet in order to recover from the fatigues of their long journey, and it was during this interval of re-

pose that Augustine made a proposition that one or two of the band should proceed from Arles to Rome in order to report to Gregory the success they had met with in England,<sup>1</sup> and to give fuller details of the work. Faithful to the cause, yet not without some slight inward misgivings, Oswald volunteered for this service.

"No one," said Augustine, "could be more fit than thou to lead these bearers of good tidings, but hast thou not special reasons to long for a speedy return to that land which has now become to thee doubly thy home?"

"If," replied Oswald, "any such longing hath entered my heart, let me drive it forth at once; it is a dark thought placed there by the enemy of all light. He who said, 'Whoso loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,' will not brook my setting her, whom I love more dearly than all else on earth—who is, ere long, I trust, to become my bride, before His Bride, the Church."

"Thou answerest nobly," replied Augustine, "nor can I gainsay the truth of thy words. I would never be instrumental in placing any stumbling-block in the way of thy proving thy deeper devotion to the Master's cause. If it be the will of heaven that thou shouldst re-

<sup>1</sup> Such a mission was really sent, but it was from England, after S. Augustine's return from Arles.—See Holinshed's Chronicles.

turn safely, thou wilt return, and if not, there is an ever-abiding promise kept for such as thee. 'No man who hath left house, wife, or family for His sake, whom thou servest, but will receive a double reward not only here, but hereafter.'"

After this Augustine and Oswald had no further conversation with reference to this journey, but it was understood that so soon as the Archbishop elect had received the pall, he, with part of his companions, should return direct to England, while Oswald and the remainder should set forth on their way to Rome. Two faithful friends, Paulinus and Laurentius, were to accompany him thither.

As soon as Augustine's health was sufficiently recruited after his long travel, a day was fixed, on which the pall should be conferred upon him by the Archbishop of Arles.

Before proceeding to describe this ceremony, which took place in the cathedral, I must say a few words about that, which was about to be conferred amidst so much pomp and splendour. The "pall," as its name derived from an old Latin word tells us, was a vestment, but more than this, it was a symbol of authority, and the importance which attached to it as being such a symbol increased in later times;<sup>1</sup> we read

<sup>1</sup> Dictionnaire Ecclesiastique, par une Société de juriconsultes et religieux. 1765. Article Pallium.

that the pall was a pontifical ornament reserved to the Pope, and to such Patriarchs, Metropolitans, and privileged Bishops, as he was pleased to confer it upon. It was a fillet of white woollen<sup>1</sup> material of the width of three fingers, and adorned with several crosses. It encircled the shoulders of the wearer, and from it, before and behind, hung two pendants of the length of a hand, attached to which were little plates of lead. Cæsarius, Bishop of Arles, was the first Gallic Prelate privileged to wear the pallium, the right having been accorded to him by Pope Synagrius. This right attached not to individuals but to sees, so that the prelate upon whom the "pallium" had been conferred, did not of necessity continue to enjoy it, if he should be translated to another Bishopric, but the privilege lapsed to the successor in that see to which it rightfully belonged. In later times than this story treats of, the lambs, from whose wool the pall was woven, were always supplied by the religious of S. Anne. On her festival these lambs were presented with great ceremony during the Service of Mass while the *Agnus Dei* was being sung, to the sub-deacon charged with the making of the pall, and by him they were placed on the high altar of the Church beneath which are deposited the bodies of S. Peter and S. Paul. Such in brief is an ac-

<sup>1</sup> Une bande de laine blanche.

count of this interesting vestment, so celebrated in Church history as the external badge, or symbol of the Papal power ; and now we must return to the period of the story, and take our places amidst the throng of sightseers gathered round the chief entrance of the cathedral at Arles. The train which followed Archbishop Vigilius as he entered the sacred building and of which, next to himself, Augustine was the principal personage, was worthy of the Metropolitan of Southern Gaul. Acolytes and attendant priests there were in numbers, and it was amid the smoke of incense, the display of banners, and the brilliancy of candles, that the solemn service of the Mass was begun. The building soon filled, and many in that large congregation lifted up both heart and voice in earnest supplication to God for His Blessing upon the mission in England.

After the Creed had been sung, Augustine ascended the pulpit, and gave an address to those gathered round him. It was a true missionary sermon. A short account of what his preaching had already accomplished in England, a preaching to which, as he told them in all humility, had not been wanting the external testimony of miracles. Then followed an impassioned appeal to the hearers that they would raise their fervent prayers to the Almighty and beg of Him still to continue His Divine favours

towards the missionary enterprise ; and last of all was a solemn warning to that congregation, already, as he hoped, far advanced in the spiritual life, not to neglect the greater privileges, which they had been permitted to enjoy.

On the conclusion of the sermon, the more solemn part of the Mass was proceeded with, and then at the end of all came the investiture with the pall. The Archbishop stood at the high altar, and while a solemn *Te Deum* was being chanted Augustine came from his place and knelt before him. Then Vigilius, having pointed out in a few words the authority which it symbolized, conferred the pall, and pronounced a final benediction ; the whole ceremony being brought to a close with silent prayer. Thus ended an important event in the history of our English Church, for with the pall were conveyed from the Roman See certain obligations which, however justly we may now repudiate them, we cannot deny once to have existed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See here Curteis's Bampton Lectures, page 140.



## CHAPTER XIV.

## LEAVE-TAKINGS.

**S**HORTLY after the occurrences narrated in the last chapter, Augustine bade farewell to Vigilus, and retraced his steps towards his English home. Ere he set out however, there was another leave-taking, which must not be passed over in silence. I refer to that between him and Oswald. Half regretful that he had proposed the journey, yet unwilling to check the ardour of youth in the Service of the Church, Augustine received the messages of love and affection to Edburge, of which he was to be the bearer, with an inward misgiving. He felt that if any mischance befell Oswald on the way an incurable wound would be opened in the heart of one whose purity and unselfishness were only equalled by the constancy of her love; and though he knew, that come what might, no word of reproach would ever escape her lips against himself, yet he would ever feel that, though acting unwittingly and in singleness of heart, he was the true source of the sorrow. As for Oswald, though he did not disguise his regret that so many more months must elapse ere he should meet her, whom he so tenderly loved, he was full of hope for the

future. It pleased him to be the bearer of good tidings to the Roman Court; it pleased him still more to be deemed worthy of the trust by his beloved father, and, above all, it pleased him to think that he was undertaking a task in the immediate interests of the Church. If at any moment a dark cloud seemed to hover round his future prospects it was quickly banished. Sorrow and anxiety can find little place in hearts which have all the elasticity of youth, and all the freedom which is naturally gendered of a conscience void of offence. Thus, partings and tender farewells being over, Oswald and his companions set out southwards in the direction of the coast of France, while Augustine and the remainder of the band made as rapid a journey as the weather and other circumstances would permit to Calais, and thence sailed across the narrow channel, arriving in due time at their home at Canterbury.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### EDBURGE.

**I**T is not my purpose to follow Oswald on his journey to Rome nor yet to particularize the daily life of Augustine, and the rest of the

mission-band who worked on with him at the royal city. Things went on prosperously. It would be too much to say that there were not occasional hindrances to the work, but these were more than counterbalanced by the obvious successes with which the HOLY SPIRIT blessed their labours. Amongst other good works Augustine, with the aid of pious ladies, had established a community of women which was banded together under certain rules, and which, with a superior to direct it, and under the immediate supervision of Augustine, formed what would now be called a "Sisterhood." In this society Edburge had from the first taken the greatest interest. The union of the active and practical with the devotional and contemplative life had always had great charms for her, and she saw what Augustine, like his great predecessor<sup>1</sup> of Hippo, had also seen, but what, alas! is but little recognized in our day, the great value of systematic and concerted action in the carrying on of works of mercy. The formation of such societies appears to have much to recommend it. Those who are willing to work for God, and to give up everything in order to advance His cause, ought surely to be allowed, with perfect immunity from ridicule and unfriendly criticism, to enrol themselves into a corporate body, claiming and justly

<sup>1</sup> S. Augustine, the African Bishop.

entitled to, a recognized position as such.<sup>1</sup> That certain evils are incidental to such a state cannot be denied ; the corruption arising from the undue development of a spirit of monasticism in the middle ages, only too clearly proves it, but then of what state amongst frail men cannot the same be said, namely, that with the good is inevitably mixed up an element of ill ? What S. Augustine's own views on the question of monasticism were we are not left in doubt. There remains to this day a living testimony to his opinions in the name and foundation of S. Augustine's at Canterbury.

In that association of women then of which I have spoken above Edburge took the greatest interest. During the continued absence of Oswald, she felt that the best cure for the loneliness which would often fill her heart, was to be found in constant occupation and especially in occupation which had for its end the glory of God, and the advancement of His Church. Engaged then in what we should call parochial cares, in aiding both by money and sympathy the formation of this Sisterhood,<sup>2</sup> and last, but not least, in close attendance on her parents,

<sup>1</sup> The value of such societies is pointed out by Dr. Newman, "Church of the Fathers," chapter on Demetrius, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> According to history the formation of such female societies did not take place till a considerably later period.

Edburge found that three months had passed away since the return of Augustine, far more speedily than she had deemed it possible they should, when first she had heard of the prolonged absence of her lover. With her parents she dwelt alternately at Canterbury and Reculver, at the latter place in the house which Ethelbert had been erecting before the arrival of Augustine. It was at Reculver that she received a message which shall be narrated in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### SAD TIDINGS.

**I**T was on the afternoon of a day preceding that on which the royal party were purposing to return from Reculver to their home at Canterbury, that a messenger or bode arrived in haste with tidings which he was on his way to deliver to Augustine at Canterbury. It seemed good to him, however, to tarry at Reculver in order to make known to the king the contents of the message which he bore. Edburge had been sitting on the sea-shore watching the ripples of the tiny waves, and the dancing light and flashing sunbeams play-

ing over their crested tops. Her thoughts had unconsciously wandered across the seas, and were with her lover. In the tiny speck visible on the distant waves she dreamt that she could see the boat which was bearing him homeward. It was one of those days when not all her zeal for good works, nor all her anxiety for the spread of the truth, could stifle the longing which rose up in her breast, nor quench the fire of her natural affection.

There came a summons to her from her father ; slowly she obeyed it, and she gave one long lingering look seaward as she followed the servant, who called her to her father's presence. He was alone. Grave was his face and sad his voice as he motioned her to a seat. At last he began, and as he spake he took her hand and looked wistfully into her face, as if to see whether it betrayed any foreboding of coming sorrow. " Edburge, there *was* a time when I cared but little for this new Christian faith. It seemed to me a poor puny religion beside that of my forefathers. I thought once that a more warlike faith best beseeemed us Saxon kings, and descendants of the storm-tossed warriors of the north. Because CHRIST's religion told men to 'love their enemies,' it seemed too mild a religion for monarchs whose highest duty was to fight bravely, avenge unsparingly, and to die nobly. But now this is

changed. I have learnt late, yet not too late, the sweetness and strength of Christianity, and it is that which gives me courage to speak, and will give you courage to hear, the words which it is needful for me to utter. Edburge—he whom thou lovest—he so dear alike to thee and to our good father Augustine—is no more. God has called him hence to the glorious kingdom of the All-FATHER, to the bright and happy land beyond the dark grave, to his inheritance which JESUS CHRIST has won for him upon the Cross.”<sup>1</sup>

There was a pause. Tears dimmed the eyes of Edburge, yet she did not faint nor utter a cry. Bravely had that noble spirit been disciplined. “Father,” she at length said, and scarcely did her voice tremble, “Father, the blow is heavy, but it is God’s sending. Never may I sorrow as those that have no hope. He has gone to a far happier home than ever he could have found on earth. But for our poor Augustine, how terrible for him ! how terrible a loss too to the cause of CHRIST’s holy Church ! My father ! I should indeed be selfish if my own keen sorrow blinded me to the grief of others ; or if my own loss made me forgetful of the loss of CHRIST’s Church on earth. . . .

<sup>1</sup> See here the union of Teutonic myths with Christianity touched upon in the introduction to Bede’s History, by Moberly.

Let me rest for a few hours alone in my chamber, that there I may seek for support which will alone enable me to bear this trial becomingly. He who has said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,' will give me the courage to bear all that thou hast to tell."

"Go, my child," said the father; "noble and brave is thy spirit, which the fire of adversity can chasten, but not consume."

There was nothing unfeminine in the resignation and composure with which the young princess bore her heavy affliction. Think not that the sorrow which filled her heart was the less keenly felt because of her self-restraint. She was an instance, and there have been many others, of the noble endurance, and CHRIST-like patience with which the Gospel teaching animates even those who have come most newly under its influence. If we say that in the privacy of her chamber Edburge gave way to burning tears, which she would never have shed in the presence of her father, lest she should do despite to the strength of the new faith; if we follow her there, and leave her alone, and yet not alone, for God is with her, we shall be doing justice to a spirit whose bravery is alone equalled by its tenderness; the deepness of the sorrow, by the purity of the love.

The messenger who brought the sad tidings had the following details to give: "The vessel,"



he said, "in which Oswald and his companions had embarked at Marseilles had been driven by a southerly gale on to the coast of France, ere it had made two full days' journey from the port. Two only of those who were on board had escaped the wreck, having been washed ashore on spars and broken pieces of timber. Of the rest," the messenger went on to say, "no tidings had been heard, though inquiries had been made, and a careful search instituted in the hope of at least recovering the bodies. I am a deacon," the man continued, in the interview he had with the king, "of a village hard by where the two survivors landed, and they bade me come forward with all expedition to relate to Augustine the sad fate which had befallen their companions. They themselves at present are unable to travel by reason of sickness, and the injuries they sustained, but they were most anxious that both thou, O king, as well as thy great servant, Augustine, should be well assured how that all the band faced death with calmness and composure, and that Oswald, before the vessel became a wreck, besought any who should escape the perils of the sea to bear to thy daughter Edburge a message of his unalterable affection; he besought her not to forget him in her prayers, above all, at the service of the altar, and he made of her one request that, if

she should feel so called, she should give herself entirely for the remainder of her life to God's service; that since on earth they were not permitted to wed, their souls should still hold sweet communion—the communion of God's saints, and that in God's own time, which he prayed might be hastened, they should meet together in the blessed company of those gathered round the throne of the Lamb."

Such was the burden of the message, and Edburge heard it with resignation and acquiescence. "My father," she said, "I have but one duty now to perform: it is to obey his will whose words are more binding on me in death than they ever were in life. And in following out his last wish I am but obeying the dictates of my own heart, which, dearly as I love thee, O father, and thee too, my mother, yet calls me out of this troublesome world. He who said, 'Whoso loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me,' hath promised great rewards to those who should leave father and mother for His Name's sake,—in this present world a hundredfold of consolation, and in the world to come eternal life. So then it now remains for me only to seek the good father Augustine, and under his guidance to give myself for ever to the little company of faithful ones whose only thought

is how best to carry out the work of their dear LORD and Master.”

What was the answer of Edburge’s parents? only such an answer as could be given by brave and noble hearts—to so noble and self-denying a spirit. The Saxon king and queen, rude and untutored children in CHRIST’S school, perceived in their daughter the voice of JESUS calling her to Him. They could not refuse His petition, dearly as they loved their daughter they loved Him more, nor did they dare to throw a stumbling-block in the way of one of His little ones.

Thus it fell out in due course that Edburge became the child of the Church, in a more special and marked manner than when the sign of the Cross was first impressed upon her brow. Her gentleness and love shone out all the brighter under the mild restraint of the Sisterhood, and she found there such quiet and peace, such spiritual joys in living more closely to GOD, that she never once had occasion to regret the moment when she forsook the pomp and ceremony of the Court at Canterbury, for the modest retirement of the monastery<sup>1</sup> at Minster.

<sup>1</sup> In old times the name Monastery applied as much to the religious houses for women as for men.

I resign the peace of the cloister for the tumult of the world."

"Edburge," said Augustine, "he HAS returned—he thou lovedst, the link that bound thee to the world."

"Oswald!" she exclaimed. "Oswald returned! My lover come back to me! No! it cannot be, not in this world. I shall indeed go to him, but he shall *not* return to me. Holy father," she continued, "is it to prove my sincerity that thou art thus trying me?"

"My words, Edburge," he said, "are true. The sea was more merciful than we had supposed. It has spared God's faithful servant. He has returned once more to these shores—and once more he longs to see thee."

She covered her face with her hands, and at length said half in a whisper—"And only once!"

It was but a few seconds ere she made this reply; brief was the space—yet keen the struggle. The heart strove for liberty, but it was but a momentary strife. A voice whispered to her—"That heart is no longer thine to give; it is Mine and Mine alone."

At length Edburge rose. "Father," she said, "I will see Oswald once more—once more to bid him a last farewell. But tell me this: Will it break that noble heart (may God spare me this!) to hear words from me which

doubtless he is not prepared to hear—that in this world I *never* can be his?"

"No! Edburge," answered Augustine, "the greatness of thy nature is reflected in his. He bade me come hither to learn whether thou still caredst for the world and its ways. He has for ever renounced his claim to a heart which has sought a higher betrothal than ever could be obtained in this poor world of ours. He will see thee once again to set thee free with his own lips from the only link which still binds thee to the world."

They met, as Augustine had said, once again. Down into the cloistered cell where that last meeting took place, streamed rays of golden sunshine, emblems of the divine hope which stirred those united hearts—a light to gild the consecration of those hearts to God.

"Dearest one," said Oswald, softly; "thinkest thou that I grudge thee a joy far greater than ever man could give? Thinkest thou that my selfish love would break through the peace which thy holy calling alone can impart, or that one word of mine, nay, even one thought, should ever hinder thee from choosing that good part which shall not be taken from thee? Nay, rather in yonder house,<sup>1</sup> upon which the sun now sheds his golden light, this life of mine shall be for ever passed. Near to

<sup>1</sup> The "fair monasterie" referred to at page 67.

thee, with heart knit to heart, and both uplifted heavenward, we will live on, one in hope—one in wish ; servants of one Master, heirs of one promise ; greater unity, dearest, the world cannot give, but we can look forward to it perfected, completed in that land where God's ever abiding presence binds all together in closest embrace. We can yet be true—true to each other ; better still, true to God. His ways are very inscrutable, very far beyond man's finding out, but we shall learn apart from the world, better far than we could have learnt in it, how that God's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace."

Edburge's only reply, uttered once and again, was, "God overrules everything for good. Truly God is very merciful : to Him be all the praise."

Thus ends my story. Of the others who acted in it their subordinate parts history for the most part will give an account. My interest in them was only in so far as they were connected with my hero and heroine whom I have brought to the altar, not that indeed where holy matrimony is celebrated before God, but where a purer sacrifice still is offered, that of two young devoted hearts joined together, and then relinquished entirely to His service, bandoned to His love.

There is a life of joy and peace of which the world knows nothing, because it is lived apart from the world. The writings of saints, both men and women, of hermits, of celibates, of monks, will prove surely to the hardest, most practical, most unsympathizing heart that ever beat upon this dull earth, that there are spirits which shine like glowworms, more brightly in the dark ; and none surely can venture to deny that much nobility of soul, nay, more, much practical usefulness have been displayed by those who have so lived as to be able to hand down mementoes of holiness and humility to encourage the way-worn on their journey ; mementoes such as would have perished for ever amidst the thickets that entangle, the tempests that sweep across the battle-field of the world.











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